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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, December 13, 1933.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Holiday Nuts." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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The latest news from the North Pole is that Santa Claus is concentrating on inexpensive, homemade gifts this year. Scouts from up North quote old Santa as saying that you can spend imagination and skill and time on your Christmas presents in place of money; that if you choose wisely what you're going to make, these gifts that cost next to nothing will be just as welcome to your friends as lavish purchases. For example, you can sometimes make most successful gifts just from supplies you have on hand.

Let me tell you how a friend of mine works out her Christmas plan. She lives on a farm in Pennsylvania. And on that farm is a large grove of hickory trees. So, a few years ago, she began to study up on the good things to be made from hickory nuts. She collected recipes from far and near and tried them out. Now, her kitchen file contains many first-class nut recipes. Each year when Christmas comes around her lucky friends receive one of her gay packages containing some kind of hickory-nut food. One year she sends hickory-nut cakes or cookies. Another year she may make nut candies of various sorts. Sometimes she just prepares boxes of carefully picked nut meats. Her gifts don't cost her much, but they're worth a lot to her friends. They couldn't buy these good things in the shops for any amount of money.

Now perhaps you have some nuts going begging on your property. Or perhaps you can get some very cheap. If so, why not make a specialty of nut confections for gifts this year? Whether you live up North in the hickory nut country or down South in the land of pecans or peanuts -- in fact, wherever you live and whatever nuts you may have on hand, you can use them to good advantage for inexpensive Christmas gifts.

Let's discuss a few easy ways to fix nuts for the holiday bonbon dish. Since most of us are busy at this season of the year, we haven't time to go into complicated cooking processes and make very fancy confections. But we can use some of the good and simple and inexpensive recipes that the specialists have worked out.

One of the favorite ways of fixing nuts is to salt them. Salted almonds and peanuts are probably our most popular salted nuts. But you can prepare almost any kind of nut this way. Almonds and peanuts and other kernels having a smooth surface are best if you blanch them before you salt them. Of course, you know that blanching just means removing the dark skin and leaving the white meat underneath. To blanch almonds, you drop them in boiling water until the skin loosens enough for you to slip it off. This hot-water method is successful for almonds but not for Brazil nuts. To remove the dark skin covering the white meat of the Brazil nut, you soak the nut in a lye solution for a few minutes. Then you rinse off the

lye solution carefully, drain the nuts, and rub off the skins. After blanching, dry all nuts thoroughly and drop them in a kettle of deep fat to fry until they are a light brown. Drain the fat from the nuts. While the nuts are still warm, shake them in salt. Store them in an airtight container.

If you like sweet nuts, you have your choice of several different methods of preparation. You can glaze nuts or spice them or dip them in chocolate. Glazed nuts -- or glaze nuts, as some people call them, look like some beautiful, clear, icy food brought from a crystal cave up at the North Pole. They make a very handsome Christmas delicacy. White, smooth almonds or Brazil nuts with a clear, crystal coat are especially attractive. Other nuts you can glaze with the skin left on. Here's the way you do it. Cook together two cups of sugar and one cup of water and one-third teaspoon of cream of tartar. Stir until the sugar dissolves. Then let the sirup cook until it begins to discolor. Remove the saucepan of hot sirup from the stove and set it in a pan of hot water to check the boiling. Now, stick each nut separately on the point of a long hatpin or a steel skewer. Then dip in the hot sirup for a moment and lift out onto a metal sheet where the sirup will harden into a coat of glaze.

By the way, better consult the weather man before you start to glaze nuts. On a damp day the sugar coat is likely to become sticky. Dry weather is the best for this job. And remember to keep your glazed goodies in a tight can away from dampness.

Another kind of sweet nut that makes a pretty confection with a lively taste is spiced nuts. A good combination of spices for nuts is nutmeg, ginger, cloves and cinnamon. Here's the way you spice any nuts that you care to fix this way. Nine ingredients:

- 1/2 pound of shelled and blanched almonds or other nuts,
- 2 cups of confectioners sugar,
- 1/2 cup of cornstarch,
- 2 teaspoons of salt,
- 1 teaspoon of nutmeg,
- 1/4 cup of cinnamon,
- 2 teaspoons of ginger,
- 1 tablespoon of ground cloves, and
- 1 egg white.

Shall I repeat that list? (REPEAT)

Now, first mix the dry ingredients together -- that is, the sugar, the cornstarch, salt and spices. Sift these together three times. Then beat the egg white slightly and add to it two tablespoons of cold water. This diluted egg-white is to help the spice mixture stick to the nuts. So dip the blanched nuts into the egg white and then roll in the dry spice mixture. Now make a layer of the spice mixture in a shallow baking pan and place the nuts on it, separating each one. Cover with the rest of the spice mixture and bake in a slow oven for two to three hours. Remove from the oven and sift off the loose powder. You can save any of the spice mixture left over and use it again. These spiced nuts come out of the oven with a good-looking rough coating.

To make chocolate dipped nuts, break up cake chocolate made especially for dipping candies and put it into a shallow dish over hot water. As soon as the chocolate begins to soften, remove it from the hot water and stir it until it is all melted. Now dip the nuts into the chocolate and then set them on waxed paper to dry.

By the way, the chocolate coating will stay on most nuts better if you leave the skins on. This is true of almonds, pecans, and brazil nuts which have tight skins that form a rough surface for the chocolate to stick to. So don't blanch such nuts as these. Peanuts are an exception. Roast, shell, and then skin them before dipping in chocolate.

Tomorrow: "Christmas Greens."

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